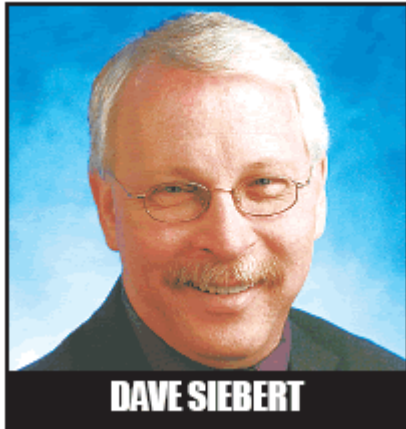


The Desert Advocate
January 25, 2007

Michael Murphy



Siebert will push for more federal highway dollars

by Michael Murphy

NORTH PHOENIX – Photo radar isn't the answer to curbing speeders on Loop 101 through the north Valley, Phoenix Vice Mayor Dave Siebert says.

"Choosing between adding more officers to patrol our highways or additional photo radar cameras on the Loop 101, I would choose more officers every time," said Siebert, who represents District 1 in northwest Phoenix. "There is no substitute for a certified peace officer."

Siebert's views may run contrary to the seeming popularity of photo radar. But his opinions also may carry more weight these days, thanks to a recent vote by his fellow city council members.

Siebert, 46, was unanimously elected vice mayor earlier this month, a job that gives him more responsibilities and opportunities— and clout for his northwest Phoenix constituents.

Siebert will fill in for Mayor Phil Gordon when Gordon is out of town, and he'll be representing his colleagues on several citywide issues such as public safety and transportation.

The bad news?

His term expires Jan. 2, 2008. And because of term limits, he's barred from seeking re-election. Siebert is serving his third four-year term.

Siebert, though, says don't count him out.

While he's undecided about future opportunities, "I know for certain that once my term expires, I will remain active in the community and I will continue to advocate for issues related to public safety."

Siebert has built a reputation as a staunch law and order advocate, having served on the city's public safety subcommittee for more than 11 years and chairing it for the past seven years. A summa cum laude graduate of ASU with a Bachelor's degree in criminal justice, he is an advocate for increasing the number of police officers and firefighters citywide.

That advocacy extends to the Loop 101, where photo radar cameras have been used in an attempt to slow speeders in Scottsdale. Proponents have suggested adding additional cameras on other parts of the freeway and having the state take over the operation.

Siebert, however, says there's no substitute for Department of Public Safety patrolmen and women. Loop 101 cuts through the heart of his district, which spreads from Northern Avenue to north of New River Road.

DPS officers do more than just issue citations, he explained. "In many cases, information gathered through traffic stops provides important intelligence in curtailing crime."

Photo radar, he added, should only be used as an alternative, "when there is an insufficient number of officers to ensure the highest level of public safety."

Siebert, a fourth-generation Arizonan who grew up in the northwest Valley, also says congestion along Interstate 17 will be one of his top priorities in his final term.

The councilman plans to lobby members of Arizona's congressional delegation to

push for more federal highway dollars to speed improvements along I-17, including a conventional diamond interchange at Happy Valley Road.

“It is unfair to continue to burden city taxpayers with the responsibility of regional transportation issues,” he said. “The designation of federal dollars to this critical infrastructure is not considered “pork,” and any resident who lives north of the Loop 101 would agree it is a necessity.”

On other issues, Siebert said:

n The pace of development in far north and northwest Phoenix will be driven by the State Land Department, which owns vast swaths of property in the area. “I will continue to work closely with various city departments and the State Land Department to ensure that future growth anticipated by the eventual sale of state trust land is planned responsibly.”

n Phoenix has no plans to annex additional lands north and west of its current boundaries. “Current infrastructure north of the Carefree Highway is limited and is being looked at as part of our long-term plan.”

n He is proud of the agreement reached between community leaders and the developer of an auto mall in north Phoenix “that ensures the highest development standards with the least impact

on surrounding communities.” The stipulations and “comprehensive design standards” reached in the agreement will “protect the integrity, open space and character of this area” and will help guide future development in other parts of north Phoenix.

